DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 089 EA 019 212

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TITLE Total School Intervention Programs: A State Initiative to Improve Staff Development through Organization Development.
PUB DATE Feb 87
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Washington, DC, February 12-15, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Cooperative Planning; Cooperative Programs; Demonstration Programs; Educational Change; *Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Improvement Programs; Instructional Development; *Instructional Improvement; Intervention; Long Range Planning; *Organizational Development; Organizational Effectiveness; *Participative Decision Making; Problem Solving; School Districts; Staff Development; *State Programs; State School District Relationship; Student School Relationship; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS *Maryland

ABSTRACT

A collaborative approach to solving school problems in Maryland emphasizes planned change through organization development processes. Organization development, a process of planned improvement in overall functioning, strives for sustained capacity in problem-solving by communication, goal-setting, conflict resolution, and commitment. The organization, rather than outside consultants, defines planned change, and continuous data collection and analysis provide collective awareness. Outside consultants act as facilitators. Since 1977, Maryland has developed the Instructional Leadership Project (ILP) and the Teacher Decision Making Project, which are models for the state Total School Intervention Programs. The two programs are based on an organization development change model that focuses on instructional improvement and school climate through staff team development. The Total School Intervention Programs emerged from collaboration between state and local educational structures, with assistance from the University of Maryland. Districts were supportive because programs were tailored for local needs and outside assistants worked with personnel as equals. Evaluaters of the ILP noted student testing improvement. Staff collaborative decisionmaking increased, and 97 percent of respondents in 1986 observed greater confidence among teams in solving problems. Staff development improved, and teachers reported more assistance in instructional improvement. The majority also noted improvements for students in instruction and school climate. (CJH)

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TOTAL SCHOOL INTERVENTION PROGRAMS:

A STATE INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

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Paper presented at the annual conference of
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Washington, D.C., February, 1987.

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TOTAL SCHOOL INTERVENTION PROGRAMS: A STATE INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

The state of education in the United States continues to be the focus of much public attention and concern. While educators have welcomed the long overdue attention to critical schooling issues, they have been inundated by a continuous round of recommendations, prescriptions, and higher expectations from legislative bodies, state agencies, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, and parent groups. These groups, which want to help solve the problems in our schools, unfortunately tend to be convinced that they have all the answers. All too often, they offer packages and programs or outside expertise that impose change on the schools rather than provide firsthand assistance needed by local educators to successfully work through their own, invariably unique set of problems, educational needs, and community expectations. What is needed is a collaborative effort among interested parties, and this would require a change in attitude and approach to helping educators solve local problems.

Just such a collaborative approach is used by the Pupil Services Branch of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in working with local school districts to design proactive programs aimed at reducing student disruption in schools. The collaboration between MSDE and the local education agencies (LEAs), with assistance from the University of Maryland, has led to the development of The Total School Intervention Programs which are unique in their flexibility and their philosophy that individual schools need to determine their own course of action based on their local concerns and an analysis of data. This emphasis on local ownership of planned change lends itself to the use of organization development (OD) processes in the effort to improve instruction and school climate, thereby reducing student disruption.

The Organization Development Approach

Organization Development, a process of planned improvement in the overall functioning of an organization, is one approach to school improvement that has gained currency over the last twenty years. The goal for OD is that a school "achieve a sustained capacity for solving its own problems" by clarifying communication, establishing clear goals, uncovering and resolving conflicts and problems in groups, making clear decisions that capture commitment, and self-consciously assessing the directions the work is taking (Schmuck & Runkel, 1985, p. 10-11).

Grounded in the applied behavioral sciences and relying on the planned interventions of third party or outside consultant-facilitators (referred to also as change agents, catalysts, change facilitators, and OD consultants or practitioners), OD differs in significant ways from traditional change programs (French & Bell, 1984). Outside OD consultants do not use the medical model of diagnosing the problems of an organization, providing recommendations for the cure, and making an early exit. Rather, the emphasis in OD is on assisting client organizations in developing ways to diagnose and solve their own problems and that generally takes two to three years (Bassin & Gross, 1978). Furthermore, OD focuses on on-going work teams as the key element rather than on individuals, as does management development (French & Bell, 1984). In this way, OD goes beyond traditional staff development and content consultation which aim to bring about "changes in cognitions, attitudes, and skills within individuals" (Schmuck & Runkel, 1985, p. 13). Instead, OD focuses on the development of groups and organizations and aims at developing new structures for increasing collaboration which enhance the group's functioning, thus minimizing the reliance on expert prescriptions for solutions to problems (Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980). This focus appears to have a more long lasting impact on school improvement than a whole series of inservice programs by outside experts on innovations in curriculum or teaching strategies (Huse & Cummings, 1985).

Although much of the school change research has been on innovations rather than organization-wide change, there is a growing number of researchers who argue that organizational change should be the primary focus for improving schools (David & Peterson, 1984; Bird, 1984; Little, 1981; Lieberman, 1985; Huse & Cummings, 1985; and Schmuck & Runkel, 1985). What is needed, they say, is an increase in collegiality, collaboration, and experimentation among school faculties. And an OD approach is possibly the most viable method to use in bringing about such change.

An OD approach to school improvement should have the following characteristics which have been synthesized from the writings and research of Schmuck and Runkel (1985), Huse and Cummings (1985), French and Bell (1984), Fullan, Miles, and Taylor (1980), Runkel, Schmuck, Arends, and Francisco (1979), Bassin and Gross (1978), and Schmuck and Miles (1971):

1. emphasizes a process of planned change in which the nature of the change is defined and owned by the client organization rather than provided as "the answer" by the outside consultants.

2. is based on continuous data collection, analysis, and feedback for collective awareness.

3. focuses on the development of groups and organizations and on individual development as required to improve group functioning.

4. emphasizes horizontal and vertical collaboration for problem solving and decision making.

5. uses a variety of planned programmatic activities designed to help an organization become more effective.

6. advocates that the OD consultant models those effective behaviors the consultant is trying to instill in the clients.

7. emphasizes developing client organization capabilities for future problem solving which often includes developing internal teams of organizational specialists.

8. is a long-term systemic process rather than a one-shot intervention.

9. uses outside consultants as catalysts, facilitators, and trainers.

The Total School Intervention Programs sponsored by the Pupil Services Branch of MSDE and supported by College of Education staff from the University of Maryland, College Park and Baltimore County campuses, are predicated on an organization development model.

The Total School Intervention Programs

The Pupil Services Branch has been working with local education agencies since 1977 in developing pilot programs in staff development and school team development based on an OD approach as part of a state initiative to reduce student disruption through improving instruction and school climate. Two of those programs, the Instructional Leadership Project (ILP) and the Teacher Decision Making Project (TDM), have been developed and refined to the point that they now serve as models for the Total School Intervention Programs in the state.

The Total School Intervention Programs employ a resource model for delivery of service predicated on identifying school-based leaders who will serve as resources to classroom teachers, provide professional development on a wide range of instructional improvement topics to those teachers, and work closely and collaboratively with the school principal (Griffin, Barnes, O'Neal, Edwards, Defino, & Hukill, 1984). These school-based leaders ensure the

transfer of training by establishing a norm for collaboration and engaging in peer coaching so teachers can practice in their classrooms the techniques they learned in staff development sessions (Joyce & Showers 1982; Little, 1981). In this way, classroom teachers acquire the skills to deal more successfully with students' academic and behavioral needs. They learn to use a variety of teaching techniques more effectively as well as to create a positive school and classroom climate that promotes student success and reduces student disruption.

The Total School Intervention Programs facilitate change in schools and in teacher practice by focusing on:

1. School Team Development: Increasing collaboration of school-based instructional leaders in data collection and analysis, goal setting, and action planning to solve local school problems related to instruction, climate, and classroom management.
2. Inservice Sessions for the School Team: Providing staff development for instructional leaders which focuses on facilitating change and on a range of strategies for improving classroom management, school climate, and instructional decision making that they can then share with their teachers.
3. School-Based Staff Development: Increasing formal and informal staff development activities, conducted by school-based instructional leaders for teachers, which focus on each school's collaborative efforts to improve instruction and school climate.

Both the Instructional Leadership Project (ILP) and the Teacher Decision Making Project (TDM) are based on an OD model for facilitating change. Both employ a resource model for delivery of service. And both ILP and TDM focus on improving instruction and school climate through staff development and team development. The difference in these two model programs lies in their primary focus. ILP focuses primarily on change at the school level and is designed for secondary schools while TDM focuses primarily on change at the classroom level and is adapted for use more frequently at the elementary level.

Collaborative Efforts of MSDE, University of Maryland, and Local School Districts

The success of the Total School Intervention Programs has been a result of the cooperation and collaboration between state and local education agencies with guidance and technical assistance from the University of Maryland. Basing the problem solving in local schools and school districts on an organization

development model has ensured that interested parties to school improvement can collaborate as equals.

The collaboration was not intentionally designed by the institutions involved, however. Rather, it was the informal network among individuals at the university, the state department of education, and the school systems, all of whom were engaged in the difficult work of making schools better for kids and teachers, that brought these institutions together.

The Pupil Services Branch provided training for school principals participating in the Maryland Professional Development Academy on Disruptive Youth. As a follow-up service to Academy participants, Pupil Services staff helped those principals develop and implement projects in their schools which relied on school team development, school team training, and school-based staff development. Together, they designed programs tailored to meet local needs. Pupil Services also granted seed money to schools and school districts involved in these Total School Intervention Programs.

The University of Maryland contributed to the theoretical framework that became the basis of the early pilot projects. Because the organization development approach to facilitating change was so successful, that approach was infused into most of the Total School Intervention Programs. The University's interest in conducting research led to an active contributuion in the area of program design and evaluation. Other relationships developed as a result of the University's willingness to assist the state education department and the local schools and school districts in a collaborative way. Graduate assistantships were made available to the University through the Pupil Services Branch. Currently, MSDE and the College of Education are exploring the possibility of offering university credit to participants in the extensive training activities associated with the Total School Intervention Programs.

The local school districts have supported the Total School Intervention Programs with local funds and have been active participants in the leadership development training process. Because the outside assisters from MSDE and the University focused on working with local personnel as equals, recognizing the expertise they brought to the problem solving process, they have successfully adapted model programs to meet local needs.

The contributions of the University and the state education agency have been tailored to meet these local needs. Thus these contributions have received wide acceptance by local educators because of increased emphasis on the process of school improvement and the enhancement of local personnel.

Program Evaluation: An Example of a Cooperative Effort

The positive changes that have taken place in schools involved in the Total School Intervention Programs have not always been measurable. However, the oldest of these programs, the Instructional Leadership Project (ILP), has been evaluated by Anne Arundel County Public Schools, the Maryland State Department of Education, universities and colleges within Maryland, and outside consultants each year beginning in 1981. The evaluators have noted an improvement in student achievement as measured by standardized and criterion referenced tests. Attendance figures remained stable at approximately 94%. And those schools which focused on reducing student disruption as their primary goal indeed accomplished that goal. In fact, the most recent study, conducted by the University of Maryland in conjuction with MSDE, shows that 94% of the respondents said the work of the ILP on planned change was highly useful to the schools. No matter what specific goals the school teams set for themselves, each group noted that ownership of school goals had increased significantly and that that led to a higher degree of goal achievement for most schools, especially after the first year of their participation in the ILP.

Evaluators noted significant changes in the participating schools that are less tangible than test scores. The ILP was instrumental in modifying the role of the department chairperson from manager of materials to instructional leader. Collaborative decision making among teachers, department chairpersons, and administrators on instructional issues increased, and 97% of the respondents in the most recent study noted an increased confidence of the school teams that together they could solve the school's problems. Both the quantity and quality of school-based staff development increased as a result of the ILP as noted by 84% of those interviewed for the 1986 study.

As a resource model, the ILP did not provide direct assistance to classroom teachers nor to students. Nonetheless, 79% of the respondents in the 1986 evaluation noted a positive change for teachers based on improved communication and collaboration as well as increased assistance to classroom teachers in improving instruction Eighty-two percent also noted a positive change for students based on improved instruction and school climate.

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